

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Neighborhoods  
Website  
page 4



Brother Thomas  
Fellows  
page 6



2009 Housing  
Report Card  
page 7



StreetSafe Boston  
page 9



## A Tribute to Boston's Neighborhoods

### The 2009 Annual Meeting

A fall season packed with activity was capped by the Boston Foundation's Annual Meeting on November 12th, an event that paid tribute to the vitality and diversity of Boston's neighborhoods. More than 400 people heard an impassioned opening speech by President and CEO Paul S. Grogan about the Foundation's resolve to help Greater Boston's vulnerable residents make it through these "hard times" and the important issues of youth safety and education.

He began by referring to the Foundation's commitment of

*continued on page 2*

## Race to the Top Coalition

### Investing in Our State's Children

On November 17th, the Massachusetts Senate passed the most significant education bill in more than a decade, informed by weeks of advocacy from an unprecedented coalition of leaders convened by the Boston Foundation. The *Race to the Top* Coalition supports innovation in education and seeks passage of reform legislation with the goal of securing the Commonwealth's share of federal "Race to the Top" funding. (See story on page 5.)



## The Wire and The Word on the Street

### StreetSafe Boston in Dialogue

**T**he Word on the Street is a compelling series of programs sponsored by StreetSafe Boston, the Boston Foundation initiative dedicated to curbing youth violence in Boston's neighborhoods. The goal is to bring together residents, civic and business leaders and funders of StreetSafe Boston to engage in a continuous process of learning about the devastating impact of youth violence on our city—and to discuss strategies for stopping the violence.

This fall, on October 30th, *The Word on the Street* focused on *The Wire*, HBO's Peabody Award-winning drama series that aired for five seasons and vividly portrayed life on the streets of Baltimore. The dialogue began the night before at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government during a public forum sponsored by the Boston Foundation and featuring Harvard professors William Julius Wilson and Lawrence Bobo and members of the cast of *The Wire*.

"*The Wire* has done more to enhance our understanding of a systemic urban inequality that constrains the lives of the poor than any published study," said Professor Wilson, the legendary Harvard sociologist who plans to teach a course on the show. "More specifically, the show exposes the drug war as a fraudulent attack on communities of color." One of the aspects of the show most admired by Professor Wilson is the complexity of the characters on both sides of the law.

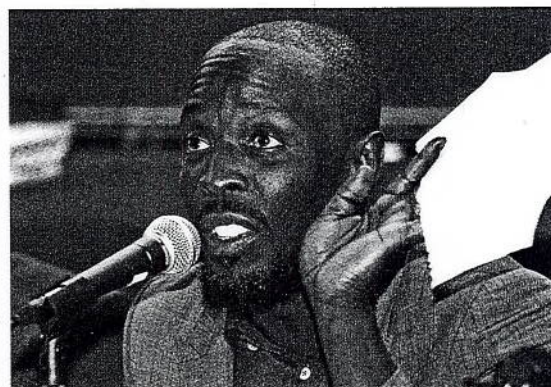
Professor Bobo, agreed. "It is rare that a television show holds up a mirror to us," he said. "*The Wire* reflects the toxic combination of entrenched poverty, public policy failures, an ever-expanding pursuit of a war on drugs and the 'get tough' policy that has led to an explosion of intrusion on the part of the legal system into the lives of the poor." He pointed to the historic rise in incarceration in the U.S. in recent years, particularly among black men.



Prof. Lawrence Bobo (left) with Andre Royo, who played Bubbles on *The Wire*



Prof. William Julius Wilson (right) with Sonja Sohn, who played Detective Kima Greggs on *The Wire*



Michael Williams, who played Omar Little on *The Wire*

continued on page 10





Donnie Andrews, the inspiration for the character of Omar Little on *The Wire*, speaks during the Boston Foundation's *Word on the Street* program. Other panelists (from left): Boston Police Officer Vance Mills, *The Wire*'s Andre Royo; Boston School Police Officer David Singletary; *The Wire*'s Sonja Sohn; Yale University's Brandon Terry, and Ella J. Baker House's James Dauphine.

## StreetSafe Boston from page 9

"One in nine black men between the ages of 20 and 34 are behind bars," he said.

Michael Williams, who played Omar Little, a character who made his living by robbing drug dealers on the streets of Baltimore, shared details from his own youth, which included traumatic experiences and searing violence. "I'm proud that *The Wire* was a voice for people who normally go unheard," he said. "Our kids are dying in America like we're some third-world country."

The dialogue continued at the Boston Foundation the next day where Donnie Andrews, who was the inspiration for the character of Omar Little, served on a panel moderated by Rev. Eugene Rivers. "I started out as every other black kid in America," said Mr. Andrews. "I got caught up in the life in Baltimore." He described an epiphany he had when a young man was killed in a violent confrontation. "I thought 'this guy's black like me; he's human like me'." He went on to talk about his relationship with Ed Burns, who arrested him in Baltimore while serving as a police officer there for 20 years, then went on to become a teacher and eventually a writer and producer for *The Wire*.

"I took my punishment," said Mr. Andrews, "18 years in prison; and he stood by me the whole time. The more education I got, the stronger I got. Now every day I wake up feeling like I've got to give something back."

Actress Sonja Sohn has been using her celebrity status, earned through her outstanding portrayal of Detective Kima Greggs on *The Wire*, to give something back. She and other cast and crew members launched *reWIRED for Change*, a nonprofit organization that works to empower young people living in the most underserved communities across the country through education, media advocacy and street-based intervention.

"The last time I was here in Boston I learned about *StreetSafe Boston*," she said, "and it blew me away. It's offering not only an anti-violence component, but wraparound services. That's why it will be successful. All too often, failed institutions, neglected neighborhoods and disintegrating families have left young people without any opportunities for a better life."

After the panel, Robert Lewis Jr., Boston Foundation Vice President for Program and chief architect of *StreetSafe Boston*, spoke to the initiative's streetworkers, who work day and night with proven-risk youth in five Boston neighborhoods disproportionately affected by violence. "When a lot of people run away from these folks, you run to them," he said. "I'm so proud of all of you." He then introduced Foundation President and CEO Paul Grogan, praising his leadership.

"The scope of this terrible problem of youth violence leads many people to conclude that we can't do anything about it,"

## Radio Boston Program Explores Gang Violence

On November 23rd, a special Radio Boston program was recorded live in Faneuil Hall on the subject of gang violence in Boston and efforts to combat it.

Guests included Gary French, Boston Police Department Deputy Superintendent; Rev. Jeffrey L. Brown, Executive Director of Boston TenPoint Coalition; Robert Lewis Jr., Vice President for Program at the Boston Foundation; and Tina Chery, President and CEO of the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute. Several youth outreach workers and other audience members also spoke. Visit [radioboston.org](http://radioboston.org) to listen to the show.



said Mr. Grogan, "but the message from *StreetSafe Boston* is that if we focus on those neighborhoods where most of the violence occurs and those youth who are at proven risk, something really can be done."

## Adding to the Ranks of Boston's Streetworkers

Following *The Word on the Street* event, *StreetSafe Boston* held a graduation ceremony for eight new streetworkers who have completed a rigorous training program, bringing the total number of streetworkers to 20. This second class of graduates includes two women, trained to work with the growing number of girls who are engaged in and affected by violent activities. The ceremony included keynote remarks from a very special guest. Daniel F. Conley, the District Attorney of Suffolk County, spoke to the graduates.

"I'm here today to deliver two messages," he said. "First, to congratulate you on your graduation from the *StreetSafe* program. Second, to let you know that you are now part of something bigger than a simple job and a paycheck... You are now a key player in Boston's future. The work you do is not glamorous and it won't make you wealthy, but it will make you rich in so many other ways."

Commenting on the challenges of recent budget cuts, he added: "This is one of the reasons I'm such a fan of *StreetSafe*. It's not just built on dollars. *StreetSafe* is really built upon the core principles that have always yielded the best and most enduring results: hard work, communication, cooperation and collaboration." He then turned to the streetworkers and said, "Make no mistake: the Boston Foundation and *StreetSafe* are bringing important resources to the table, but none more important than each of you."

On a *Boston by Night* tour, Streetworker Marcus Merritt and Program Coordinator Amaira Alicea talk with tour participants. Mr. Merritt makes contact with proven risk youth and then refers them to Ms. Alicea so that she can connect them to services.



*StreetSafe Boston*  
Streetworker  
Graduates: (Front)  
Adalgisa Andrade;  
(Back, from Left)  
Arthur Kitty, Dana  
Jones, Nicole Dailey,  
Will Dunn, Warren  
Williams and  
Stanley Greene.



Suffolk County  
District Attorney  
Daniel F. Conley  
spoke at the  
graduation of the  
latest class of  
streetworkers.

## Boston by Night

**B**oston Foundation Vice President for Program, Robert Lewis Jr., leads a series of tours to neighborhoods that are focused on *StreetSafe Boston*. Called *Boston by Night*, the tours have impressed donors of the *StreetSafe Boston* program and others with their candor and content. A tour on September 21st took participants first to O'Day Park in the South End, where they spoke with *StreetSafe* staff, then to a Boston Police Department precinct in the Bowdoin/Geneva neighborhood and finally to the John P. Holland Community Center in Dorchester. At the Center, participants engaged in an emotional conversation with Dessa Eason, the mother of Jovany Eason, age 20, who had been killed in gun violence just weeks before.